

A black and white photograph of a dense cluster of oak leaves. The leaves are large, ovate, and have prominent veins. Some leaves show signs of being eaten, with small holes visible. The lighting creates strong highlights and shadows, giving the image a textured, almost abstract quality.

Washington Park Arboretum

BULLETIN

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Fall 2013

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Washington Park Arboretum

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CONTENTS



- | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|
| 2 | Sunshine on Our Shoulders— <i>Paige Miller</i> | 14 | Naturalizing Bulbs in Turf— <i>Jane McGary</i> |
| 3 | Plants That Knit the Garden Together— <i>Barbara Blossom Ashmun</i> | 19 | The Japanese Garden Notebook of Betty Roys— <i>Betsy Anderson</i> |
| 6 | The New Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum— <i>Daniel Mount</i> | 26 | IN A GARDEN LIBRARY: New Books for Regional Gardeners— <i>Brian R. Thompson</i> |



ABOVE: *Cotoneaster conspicuus* in fruit in the parking lot at the Graham Visitors Center. (Photo by Niall Dunne)

ON THE COVER: The exquisite fall foliage of *Fothergilla major* in the Woodland Garden at Washington Park Arboretum. (Photo by Randall Hitchin)

Sunshine on Our Shoulders

For those of us living around Puget Sound, this has been the summer to remember for a long, long time: so very warm, dry, and sunny. There was no “Juneuary” this year, and nary a drop of rain in all of July. Whether your passion is hiking, kayaking, sailing, fishing or gardening, every day was a good day to be outdoors.

The sunshine even seemed to make the world smile. Salmon returned to our Pacific Coast in numbers not seen in decades. My trees were so loaded with apples I needed to brace their branches. And the old Concord grape at my p-patch produced huge, fat bunches for jars of homemade grape jelly and mounds of raisins. Crops that usually sulk in our climate—tomatoes, corn, peppers, and even eggplant—produced in abundance.

I did something rare for me and took some time to enjoy it all. I hiked in the Cascades and in city parks. I took a fabulous cruise to Glacier Bay in Alaska, where the weather was as fine as it was here, and went whale watching and sea kayaking. This last weekend, my little grand-kids and I outfitted their backyard picnic table as a pirate ship with a beach towel for a sail and garden rake for a rudder and tiller. All day we sailed the seas, dug for treasure and rescued the men overboard without ever leaving their backyard. Marvelous.

But, already there is a nip in the air and that familiar smell that means that fall is on its

way. The time has come to begin harvesting the remaining crops and to get ready for the return of rain and winter.

Even during this glorious summer, we have been busy preparing for the September opening celebrations for the Arboretum’s new two-acre New Zealand Forest and planning for

this winter’s display garden and Opening Night Party. And, now the pace is quickening. A friend has offered us his 15-foot-tall totem pole, which we need to help him to move and place here. Can we respond quickly to his offer? A very significant bonsai collection might be donated here. Do we have the right location for it and the means to take care of it? And, of course, we need to finish raising the last

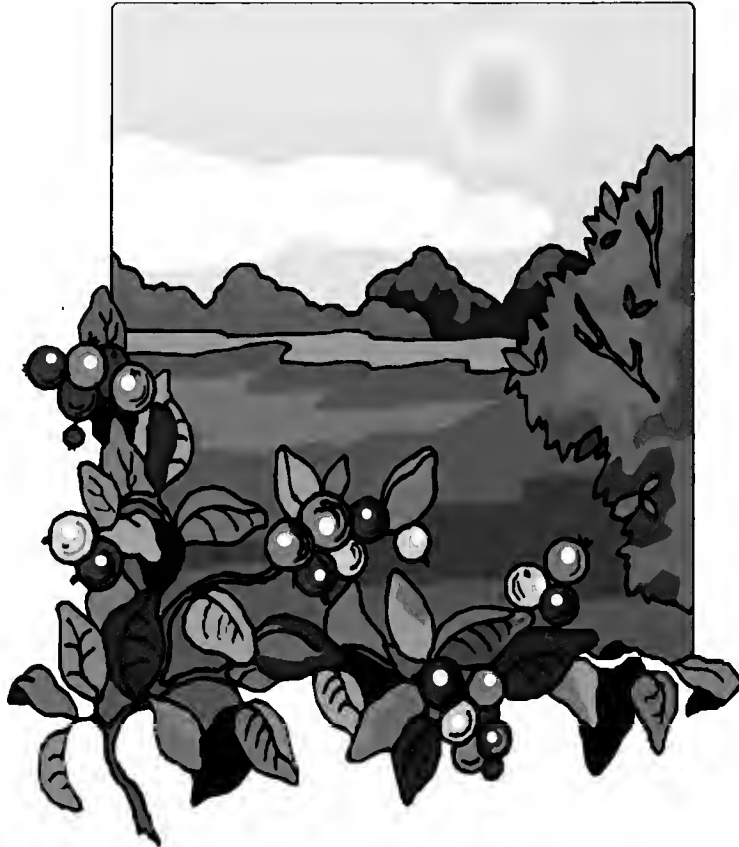
dollars for New Zealand and Cascadia, and continue to raise endowment support to care for them. Even as I write, I can feel the last glow of summer slip away as the weight of these demands slides back onto our shoulders. But, I still feel the sunshine lingering there. And, it still makes me smile.

I hope that it has stayed on with you, too.

Cheers,



Paige Miller, Executive Director,
Arboretum Foundation



Plants That Knit the Garden Together

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BARBARA BLOSSOM ASHMUN



*H*ave you ever noticed that some gardens feel so relaxing and peaceful that you don't want to leave? On a recent garden tour in Vancouver, B.C., at one garden especially, participants were lingering longer and gathering in small groups to chat. We spoke softly, in keeping with the quiet atmosphere of a garden that flowed as seamlessly as a watercolor.

At the other end of the spectrum was a collector's garden, filled with hundreds of unusual plants, dotted around the landscape helter-skelter. I noticed my eyes jumping from plant to plant with nothing to settle on, and soon I felt tired.

An important element was missing—low-key ground-covering plants to weave between trees, shrubs and more substantial perennials. These subtle workhorses support the showier divas; their plainer leaves and smaller flowers link the bigger stars with each other. Without them, the garden looks more like a nursery than a painting.

The Layering Approach to Design

Many of us begin our gardens driven by the love of individual plants, falling for brilliant flowers, textured leaves and glossy berries. Learning how to grow each plant well—determining its light, drainage, moisture, fertility and maintenance

ABOVE: *Geranium* 'Rosanne', a subtle but handsome groundcover that helps link more dramatic plants in the garden.

requirements—can be so much to digest that it's easy to overlook the other important component of creating a garden: the design.

Arranging the plants so that they blend together in a scene turns gardening into art. One helpful approach to design is to imitate the forms found in nature, in particular the layering in a forest: a canopy of trees, sheltering an understory of shrubs and descending to a carpet of perennials and ground covers. Visually, each layer—not least of them the ground cover layer—plays a key role in complementing the others. And while your ground covers should not be too flashy, you don't have to resort to dreary (and in some cases invasive) old reliables such as English ivy, Japanese pachysandra and periwinkle. Be adventurous, with colorful geraniums, dynamic sedges, elegant ferns and more.

Tapestry at the Ground Level

Autumn is a great time to take a closer look at the garden to appreciate what's working well and notice what needs tweaking. Gaps may appear in your ground cover tapestry as spring-blooming ephemerals such as daffodils, *Erythronium* and *Dicentra* go dormant, and some of summer's daylilies and peonies are spent and need to be



cut back. It may be time to consider interplanting these with longer-lasting perennials such as epimediums, ferns and hostas. Marking these areas with small stakes will remind you to plant when the weather cools down.

On a fall stroll around my garden, *Geranium* 'Rozanne' was a billowing blue-violet skirt at the feet of 'Coral Floral Carpet' roses. 'Rozanne' also scrambles into neighboring bushes so that her blue-

violet flowers seem to be blooming on the shrubs. Because her flowering period is so long and she's so reliable, I bought a few extras to add to the front of a new border where a *Stewartia* will show off white summer flowers, brilliant-orange fall color and intriguing winter bark. 'Rozanne' will provide ground-level flowers from summer through fall and also link together a few more flamboyant orange daylilies (*Hemerocallis* 'Holiday Delight') blooming in front of the *Stewartia*.

Two magenta cranesbills grow flowery skirts from a single crown, much like 'Rozanne.' 'Ann Folkard' has chartreuse leaves, while 'Patricia' bears green foliage. Both are lovely at the base of burgundy-leaved shrubs like *Weigela* 'Wine and Roses' or purple smoke tree (*Cotinus coggygria* 'Purple Smoke').

What Makes a Good Knitter?

- Plainer leaves, shapely but not distracting, preferably small.
- Small flowers, often in sprays, preferably long-blooming.
- More options for shade: *Epimedium* 'Amber Queen' and 'Sweetheart'; *Astrantia* 'Pink Pride'; and ferns, especially *Adiantum*, *Dryopteris*, *Polystichum*.
- More options for sun: *Carex testacea* and *C.* 'Cappuccino'; *Coreopsis* Big Bang Series, especially 'Star Cluster' and 'Mercury Rising'; *Gaura* 'So White'; *Sanguisorba* 'Tana.'

Where it's shady, *Carex* 'Bowles Golden' softens the base of shrubs and trees with grassy blades rising two- to three-feet tall and echoes the colors of golden-leaved hostas and yellow daylilies. It's especially striking below purple-leaved *Physocarpus* 'Summer Wine' and *P.* 'Coppertina.'

I first fell in love with *Knautia macedonica* on a visit to the Bellevue Botanical Garden decades ago. Its small, deep-red pincushion flowers were like the dots on an old-fashioned veil. Blooming in front of 'Preziosa' hydrangeas with red tints in the leaves, it brought out the best in these pink-to reddish-purple-flowering shrubs. Similarly, *Potentilla* 'Monarch's Velvet' produces a mass of small, red flowers forming a pretty petticoat at the base of any shrub. Its foliage reminds me of strawberry leaves, and the flowers are bigger than those on *Knautia*. Both are loose, fluffy plants that spread wide and grow about two feet tall—just right to hide the awkward legs of shrub roses.

Connecting With Vines

Like a garland weaving the garden, a vine can help link woody plants to each other. My favorite,

easy-going clematis, 'Etoile Violette,' scrambles through three pink roses, its star-shaped purple flowers mingling beautifully with the roses. Not all clematis climb. Shrubby *Clematis recta* makes a blowsy skirt that reminds me of baby's breath when it blooms. Lacy, white flowers top the strong stems and adorn the area at the base of an old plum tree. Mine has also naturalized in a bed moving from sun to shade, so that the whole space is alive with a froth of white, glimmering between established hybrid musk roses. ~

Adapted from an article that first appeared in the "Portland Tribune."

BARBARA BLOSSOM ASHMUN has written six gardening books, most recently "Married to My Garden," about her love affair with plants. She wrote a column for the "Portland Tribune" from 2004 through 2011 and was a contributing editor for "Fine Gardening" for many years. Her essays have appeared in "GreenPrints," "Pacific Horticulture," the "Chicken Soup" series and "Women Reinvented."



OPPOSITE: *Knautia macedonica*, with *Hosta* 'Queen of the Seas', *Saxifraga umbrosa*, and assorted ferns.

ABOVE: *Geranium* 'Patricia', another excellent knitter plant.

A *G*ATHERING by the WATERS



A New Arboretum Develops on the East Bank of the Milwaukee River

Last year, when I met with a team of naturalists developing a new arboretum on the banks of the Milwaukee River, it was the first time I had walked that watercourse in nearly 30 years. I had spent many days back in the 80s walking its lonely banks. It was a bit of nature close by in those “auto-less” college years, and I grew to love it. I sought refuge from my hot apartment under the canopy of trees in

August, or botanized in spring for my plant taxonomy class at the university

I have lived in many great river cities since those days, including St. Louis on the Mississippi and Cologne, Germany, on the Rhine. (Even now I live so close to the Snoqualmie River that its floodwaters lap at my doorstep in bad years.) Yet, of all these rivers it is not the greatest or most historic that has touched me most deeply, but the shallow 104-mile-long Milwaukee River.

In the 80s, it was a post-industrial, degraded habitat with feral charms, which held wonder for me but caused fear in most. It seemed a sad fate for a river whose name is popularly believed

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY DANIEL MOUNT



to mean “a gathering of the waters.” It was home to many Native Americans for centuries and integral in the founding and development of the city of Milwaukee. So I just had to see the new 40-acre arboretum developing on the banks of a familiar river—a river that was once dammed and ran slogging through a crime-ridden neighborhood, and was once toxic with municipal, agricultural and industrial waste.

A Diverse Partnership

The arboretum was the dream of Pieter Godfrey, an architect and historic preservation expert, who owned land along the river adjacent to 28-acre Riverside Park—an important but



LEFT: *Helenium autumnale* (sneezeweed) and *Verbena hastata* on the river bank.

ABOVE: An old park entry sign.

neglected city green space originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Godfrey shared this dream with his neighbors at the Urban Ecology Center (UEC). The UEC, an environmental education organization with three community centers adjoining Milwaukee County parks, including Riverside Park, quickly became a leader in the realization of this dream.

Though the primary function of the UEC is environmental education, it has played a huge role in reclaiming 70 acres of urban wild space throughout the city by removing invasive plants and recreating ecosystems to promote biodiversity. It also helped unite a group of influential public, non-profit and private partners to



ABOVE: Wildflowers in a clearing near the floodplain forest at the new Arboretum.

BELOW: Volunteers plant a wet prairie in the floodplain.



support the arboretum project, including the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Milwaukee County Parks, the Milwaukee River Greenway Coalition, the USDA Forest Service, and crucially (in terms of funding), the Rotary Club of Milwaukee.

When the Rotary Club of Milwaukee was looking for a project to fund in celebration of its centenary, an arboretum as a gateway to the newly created 800-acre Milwaukee River Greenway seemed ideal. Rotary Club members donated \$400,000 to create the arboretum, and this helped attract other partners and catalyzed project funding (now valued at \$8 million). Ground was broken on the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum in June 2010.

When I met with the team of young naturalists led by UEC Senior Land Steward Kim Forbeck last year, I was amazed by how much they had accomplished in a short two years and how many partners they had enlisted. Members of the local community volunteered to pull weeds and water plants. The EPA, through the auspices

of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, became one of the largest single sources of financial support for the project. Many more donors of time, money and expertise followed.

A Patchwork of Land

Like the Centennial Arboretum organization, formed of a diverse partnership, the land itself is a conglomeration. It is composed of re-claimed industrial land donated by Godfrey, 15 acres of Riverside Park owned by Milwaukee County, green space along the Oak Leaf Trail, and a mixed-used trail that cuts through the Arboretum, as well as city- and privately-owned river frontage exposed when a dam was removed downstream from the park in 1997. The dam, first built in 1853, separated the lower navigable industrial river from the upper scenic river.

The deepened stretch of the river above the dam became a popular water park for Milwaukeeans. From 1890 to 1910, it hosted swimming schools, water polo, boathouses and, of course, beer gardens. As the river above the

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dam silted in and water quality declined from agricultural and municipal runoff upstream, so did the popularity of the river. By the early 1940s the city declared the river unsafe for swimming. Like many American urban rivers, the Milwaukee River was given up for dead. This was the river I knew and walked.

But it wasn't dead.

What has happened since, and is happening still, is nothing short of a miracle. The waters have been revitalized by removing the dam and controlling pollutants entering the river. Tim Vargo, research coordinator at UEC, says that before the dam was removed there were only two species of fish in the upper river, now there are 30—including sturgeon that swim up from Lake Michigan to spawn. Vargo also lists over 180 species of birds that use the river basin as a flyway or call it home.

A new arboretum on the last stretch of natural, vegetated land through which the river meanders before being shunted via canal through downtown Milwaukee and into Lake Michigan is important for two reasons: Reviving degraded habitat to provide vital ecosystem services and support wildlife is one. The other, of equal importance, is increasing community access to urban natural space.

Arboretum project coordinator for UEC Aaron Zeleske considers the development of sustainable and universally accessible trails to be a vital component of the project. Already, the old Olmsted trails in upper Riverside Park have been repaved. One of the Centennial Arboretum partners, the River Revitalization Foundation, has created the East Bank Trail through the Arboretum—as part of the larger 13-mile “Beerline Loop,” which connects a number of

ABOVE: Mature black willows on the rivers edge.

OPPOSITE TOP: Industrial land donated to the Arboretum by Pieter Godfrey and cleared for planting an oak savanna.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Black plastic smothers riparian weeds.

Milwaukee parks and green spaces. Zeleske is looking forward to the day when, for the first time, wheelchair users will be able to access the riverbank independently.

Restoring Native Plants

Though access is important, one of the primary goals of the fledgling arboretum is the introduction of native species to this unique riparian zone. Not only will these species be important in the educational activities of the UEC, but they will also sequester eight tons of carbon from the air each year, improve water quality, reduce storm water runoff, and create more habitat for wildlife—all within one of the most densely populated parts of the city.

When I questioned Forbeck and her team about what they thought an arboretum was, they were apologetically vague, knowing that what they were creating was not necessarily a traditional arboretum. They looked to the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum, the birthplace of restoration ecology back in the 1930s, for inspiration. They do not want a collection of woody plants grown as specimens, but groups of native woody plants grown as members of larger, more complex communities of plants and animals. The plantings will be as interdependent as the partners coming together to create this arboretum.

The Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum is less than a sixth the size of our 230-acre arboretum, yet its 40 acres are blessed with a varied topography. The Arboretum has been divided along topographic lines into 10 eco-zones. Plans to represent all of the woody plants of the species-rich, forest–prairie tension zone that makes up the rich flora of southeastern Wisconsin are well underway. More than 2,200 trees will be planted, representing 72 species, including 23 species of native hawthorn (*Crataegus*). Another 70,000 shrubs and herbaceous plants representing the prairies, forests, savannas and wetlands of this area also will be planted.

Only one mile from the over 22,000-square-mile Lake Michigan, the Arboretum lies in the warmest USDA planting zone in Wisconsin: Zone



5b. The moderating effect of the lake on the harsh, upper-Midwest climate finds some southern species, like Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), in the northernmost reaches of its range, as well as some northern species like northern white cedar or arbor-vitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) in the southern limits of its range.

Eco-zones: Wet Prairie to Oak Savanna

At river level there will be wet prairies; these were being planted when I was there last August. After a year under black plastic—which raised the soil temperature to 180° Fahrenheit to kill all weeds (especially the extremely aggressive reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*) and their seeds—the soil was ready. A combination of staff, interns and volunteers from the local community were busy planting native herbaceous species. Plants, purchased or grown from seed collected at other restored prairies, are being planted out in strips, alternating with strips of open ground directly sown with seeds. It is hoped that in a few years these newly planted prairies will supply seeds for



other restoration projects in the river basin.

The extant shrub-carr—a transitional community of plants between open, wet prairie and wetland forest that is usually dominated by willows and shrubby dogwoods—was established over a decade ago, primarily by the planting of sandbar willow (*Salix interior*) shortly after the dam was removed. The introduction of herbaceous and woody plants to this willow matrix will increase its biodiversity. An extant floodplain forest, running along the river and into a ravine in Riverside Park, is at present dominated by low-quality box elder (*Acer negundo*) and ash (*Fraxinus* species). It is being under-planted with hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) and tamarack (*Larix laricina*) to create the succeeding forest. The largest tree in the park, possibly a state champion hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), is found in this ravine and dates back to the Olmsted days.

On the upper banks, where the alkaline clay soils are drier, is a remnant oak woodland from Riverside Park's inception in 1890s that features mature bur oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*)

and northern red oaks (*Q. rubra*). This area also features members of the northern mesic forest, in particular sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*). On my visit in March of 2012, educators from UEC had tapped the trees, showing students the pleasures of making their own maple syrup. There also is a beautiful small mesic prairie on this part of the park. It is managed using controlled burning, which represses non-native herbs and woody plants.

Other upland sites are designated for southern dry-mesic forest and southern mesic forest dominated by American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) and basswood (*Tilia americana*), with an understory including witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) and muscle wood (*Carpinus caroliniana*) and an abundance of the herbaceous spring ephemerals that make these forests a botanical attraction in spring.

An open oak savanna also is planned for the six acres of reclaimed industrial land south of Riverside Park. It will be a mixed forest of chinkapin, northern pin and swamp white oaks (*Quercus muehlenbergii*, *Q. ellipsoidalis* and *Q. bicolor*), as well as other hardwoods native to

ABOVE: The largest tree in Riverside Park, *Celtis occidentalis*.

the area—like shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) and American elm (*Ulmus americana*)—again under-planted with numerous shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Reviving Olmsted's Dream

Though the Arboretum does not officially open until September 28, 2013, it has already been dedicated by the National Forest Association as a "Children's Forest"—one of only a few of the 22 nationally designated forests that are located within a major urban area. The UEC has been drawing students to Riverside Park since 2004 and engaging them in a multitude of ways, whether in the classroom settings of their eco-friendly branch building or in the wilds of the park. The new arboretum is projected to draw 15,000 students and teachers a year to UEC from 30 schools citywide.

As the saying goes, "You can't step in the same river twice." While I toured the Arboretum coalescing on the eastern bank of the Milwaukee River, I saw birds and butterflies flitting among the newly planted prairie and up into the old native black willows (*Salix nigra*) I used to climb. The birch bark canoes and wooden paddleboats of yore have been replaced by polyethylene kayaks; the swimmers in woolen bloomers have given way to the scantily spandex-clad joggers. The once degraded habitats are blooming with wildflowers along the jade-green waters of the river.

The banks of the Milwaukee River are no longer a place for a lonely walk, but a place to engage in a vibrant community and see a beautiful arboretum in the making. When the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum opens this fall, the people gathered will also see Olmsted's dream alive. The dream to create a more democratic mixing of people with his park designs has been renewed in the hands of a new generation of park stewards. ~

DANIEL MOUNT is an estate gardener, garden writer and member of editorial board of the "Bulletin." He lives on a small farm in the Snoqualmie Valley. Read more of his reflections on plants and gardening at www.mountgardens.com.

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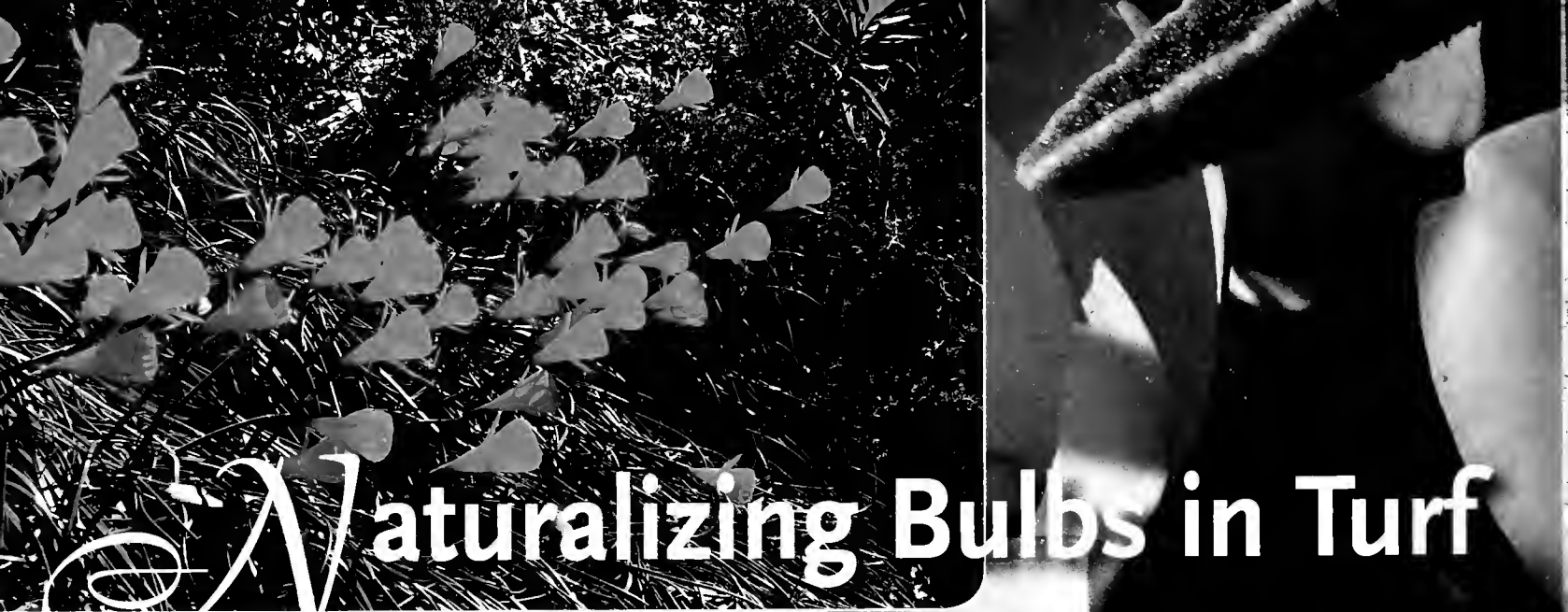
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Naturalizing Bulbs in Turf

TEXT BY JANE MCGARY

PHOTOS BY NHU NGUYEN

Meadows studded with flowering bulbs have been a subject of European art since late medieval times at least, as we see in the famous “Hunt of the Unicorn” tapestries in the collection of New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. The motif, known as “flowery mead,” was also a favorite of the backward-looking Pre-Raphaelite School of the nineteenth century. Any gardener who sees these images is likely to want to imitate them. But is it really possible?

The English garden designer and writer Christopher Lloyd described at length the flowering meadow at Great Dixter, but it’s important to know that this meadow—like those in the Swiss Alps—was mown or grazed on a carefully timed schedule to control the vigor of the grasses and allow the bulbs and perennials to complete as much of their life cycle as possible. Annual meadows are a great feature of North America’s Pacific coast, but I recall—in a “Sunset” magazine article about imitating them in the home garden—where a writer admitted that the space devoted to this display had to be treated at intervals with herbicide to control the grasses and coarse weeds that would otherwise dominate it quickly.

Experiments and Happy Accidents

Even though I came to regard the meadow garden as one of the great myths of garden designers and writers, I couldn’t resist trying several versions of



it over the years. Sowing annuals in disturbed soil in a pasture next to my former home in the foothills east of Portland, Oregon, worked for two years, but after that nothing but California poppies and *Gilia capitata* (the latter is native here) survived.

In the garden of my former home, there was a little round lawn on one of the terraces, and I considered it next. I planted a few hundred crocus corms there, mostly select varieties of *Crocus tommasinianus* because I had seen it naturalized in many Portland lawns. It turned out very well, and I found that one reason this is such a good species for naturalizing is that its leaves tend to lie horizontally more than vertically, so that one



can mow the grass in spring without harming it. Dutch crocuses (large forms of *C. vernus*) are often naturalized in grass, but their coarse vertical foliage will be damaged by mowing. That garden was plagued by voles, which eat crocus corms, but they didn't bother those in the lawn. I suspect the dense grass roots deterred their burrowing.

The bulb frames that I used to protect some bulb species from cold, wet winters at my former place were out in a field of perennial grasses and weeds, and after a few years seedling crocuses

began to appear in the field despite the density and coarseness of the grass. Ants probably dispersed the seeds. *Crocus kotschyanus* was one, and *C. pulchellus* another. The latter also spread into a mown lawn in front of the house. These are both fall bloomers.

In a Mediterranean climate, fall-blooming crocuses and other bulbs are excellent choices for growing in lawns or more naturalistic grassy areas because they flower before the grasses make their winter growth. In the fields of Greece and Turkey, such species as *Crocus goulimyi*, *C. boryi*,

OPPOSITE TOP: *Narcissus bulbocodium*. **ABOVE:** *Crocus niveus*. Both species are small and good candidates for the lawn.



C. niveus, *C. hadriaticus*, and even the cherished *C. mathewii* can be seen blooming in grass—often in spaces where sheep have grazed earlier in the year, leaving the turf very short. *Sternbergia lutea* (winter daffodil) and *S. sicula* also grow in grass.

Starting from Scratch

In my current garden in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon, I planned a bulb lawn from the beginning. I started with an area that had been torn up by trucks bringing in building materials and soil amendments. I sprayed it with the herbicide glyphosate and later tilled it. I had a pile of sod that had been stripped off to make perennial and shrub beds, so I decided to lay it on the bare area, although it wasn't the deep, lush product obtained from sod farms. I had baskets of miscellaneous bulbs, rescued from the plunge sand in the bulb frames, and in late September I literally threw them down, along with about 400 *Crocus tommasinianus* 'Whitwell Purple' and some mixed lavender and white Dutch crocuses, and laid the sod over them. A few weeks later I went to the old garden and dug up a hundred or so bulbs of *Narcissus obvallaris* from a low-lying area, where

they were naturalized in dense grass and had increased greatly, and planted them with a sharp trowel in the new bulb lawn, too.

Two springs have passed since then, and the bulb lawn is a joy—from the purple crocuses in March to the bright yellow daffodils that flower through April. After that, it is not such a joy because I have to leave it unmown until the daffodils ripen their foliage in mid-June. However, three gigantic Douglas firs overshadow the area, keeping the grass a bit under control with their wide-spreading roots, and I let the grass go dormant in summer so that it's very short when fall comes with its coolness and rain.

Suitable Species

What pops up from my random baskets of bulbs is always a nice surprise. The first flower in fall is *Acis autumnalis* (formerly *Leucojum autumnale*), which can be rather weedy in gardens here. There are some small-to-medium *Colchicum* species, notably *C. boissieri*, which spreads rapidly by horizontally extending corms. Then come the crocuses, mostly *C. kotschyanus* with a sprinkling of *C. boryi* and *C. hadriaticus*. *Crocus pallasii*

appeared this fall. I may try *C. goulimyi*, too; it wasn't hardy in my other garden but the micro-climate is warmer here.

This past spring, several *Fritillaria* species showed up, including the western American *F. affinis* and *F. biflora* and the Mediterranean *F. messanensis*, which I once photographed on a grassy terrace on Crete. Some of the low-growing *Ornithogalum* species got in and are very pretty flowering just at ground level; they're not as invasive as the star of Bethlehem, *O. umbellatum*, which can be seen naturalized in many parts of North America. A taller "thog" that likes the turf is *O. nutans* with its curiously beautiful, nodding, gray-and-white bells.

Some of the little *Narcissus* species, more likely to be seen in rocky places in nature, are happy here—including *N. callicola* and *N. rupicola*. Even *N. cantabricus* made a brave appearance. (The usual little narcissus for naturalizing in grass is *N. bulbocodium*, the hoop petticoat daffodil, and I'll add some of those; subsp. *obesus* has lax foliage that would escape the mower.) Eventually, too, there will be *Cyclamen hederifolium*, which I planted under the Douglas firs; in this area, it often turns up in lawns, spreading with the help of ants.

All these species are short enough to look natural in short grass. If you have an area of taller perennial grass, you might want to plant some of the western American bulbs in the Themidaceae—taller species of *Dichelostemma*, *Brodiaea* and *Triteleia*. Grassy meadows, dry in summer, are their natural habitat. All of these species are very easy to raise from seed. Rather than growing them in grass, I've planted mine in a chaparral type of shrub garden atop a dry slope. The summer-dry meadow is also the natural home of many *Calochortus* species,



though I haven't planted any of these mostly California natives because I think the rainy season here is just too long for most of them to tolerate. *Colchicum* has many species that grow naturally in grass, and if you leave the grass high, their spring-growing leaves will not be obtrusive. In a shady spot, you could try *Arum* species.

Bulb Lawn Tips

Here are some hints about developing a bulb lawn. First, choose an area where the grass doesn't grow very well—perhaps where the soil is naturally poor, or there are greedy tree roots. This will keep the grass from out-competing the bulbs—though, as mentioned above, some crocuses grew in very dense pasture for me. If you want to make a big planting, it's worth hiring a landscaper to lift the sod with a machine; leave the strips of sod in place and just flip them over and back as you place the bulbs under them. If you do this at the right time of year, when the grass is about to make its fall growth spurt, it won't die.

Otherwise, the best planting tool is a geologist's trowel—a long, narrow, very sturdy implement that you can stab into the turf, or even pound in with a rubber mallet. Once it's in the ground, rock the trowel a little to open a planting hole and drop in your bulb. Large-scale naturalistic planting of bulbs also can be done by two people working together, one opening planting holes with a small spade and the other crawling along placing the bulbs.

One thing the garden designers get right about bulb lawns is the principle of planting in drifts of single species or varieties. You can toss out handfuls of one variety and just plant them where they fall to get a pleasing distribution. In my bulb lawn, the crocuses are mostly through the middle and lower edge of the area, and the

ABOVE: *Dichelostemma capitatum* is great for growing in a meadow of taller perennial grasses.
FACING PAGE: The western native *Fritillaria affinis* is short enough to look natural in short grass.



narcissus in groups higher up the slope. This allows me to mow the lower part, near the road, earlier in the spring.

What you choose to plant will depend on your climate, but it's best to research the choices and concentrate on those that grow naturally in grassy habitats. Most good reference books include habitat information. My experience is strictly with summer-dormant bulbs, except for the genera I grow in irrigated perennial borders. Start with inexpensive kinds, but avoid thugs such as *Muscari armeniacum*. (There are better-behaved *Muscari* species and hybrids for the lawn.) Decide how much height you're willing to tolerate; if you can't leave the grass long for a while, you may have to resign yourself to annual replanting, which wouldn't be that bad if the space is quite small. In addition, be aware of how long the bulbs stay in growth. For example, *Anemone coronaria* is a gorgeous meadow species, but it stays in active growth here well into summer. I have it in the border, not the grass, so I can get some summer mowing done.

One important note: Don't apply broadcast lawn herbicide, including "weed-and-feed" products. It will kill your bulbous plants along with the dandelions. However, you can spot-spray dandelions, hawkweed and other coarse weeds with glyphosate when the bulbs are

dormant. If you can stand it, leave the veronica and chickweed alone—they are natural companions of most of these bulbs.

Keep the grass short during the bulbs' dormant season—not just to keep your turf looking tidy, but to prevent the grass from smothering emerging fall bulb flowers. I try to cut the grass in December after the fall bulbs have finished. If all the bulbs you've planted are very short-growing, you can mow as usual in spring. But with my daffodils and a few other kinds, I—or rather, my neighbors—have to tolerate a modest-sized hayfield until mid-June. The neighbors all think I'm crazy anyway, but I get many compliments on the early spring flowers, and the lawn has inspired at least one new crocus grower. ☺

Originally published in "The Bulb Garden" newsletter and reprinted with permission from the Pacific Bulb Society. For information on membership, visit www.pacificbulbsociety.org.

JANE MCGARY recently retired from a career as an editor of scholarly books and journals. She is a board member of the Pacific Bulb Society and is active in the North American Rock Garden Society. She grows about 1,500 taxa of bulbous plants in her garden and Mediterranean bulb house in Oak Grove, just south of Portland, Oregon.

ABOVE: *Narcissus cantabricus*, a short species that is good for naturalizing in a lawn.

Snapshots of a Shifting Landscape

The Japanese Garden Notebook of Elizabeth K. Roys

TEXT BY BETSY ANDERSON

PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH ROYS; COURTESY THE BOTANIC GARDEN OF SMITH COLLEGE
(UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED)

To realize that a certain landscape is built up absolutely from the first by artificial means and yet to see nothing but the most naturally beautiful rocks, pools and trees—is it any wonder that Japanese gardens are so fascinating? [...] One remembers them always as places of shadow and sunlight and reflections, green and rippling water, grey-green rocks and soft ferns, beauty and peace everywhere.¹

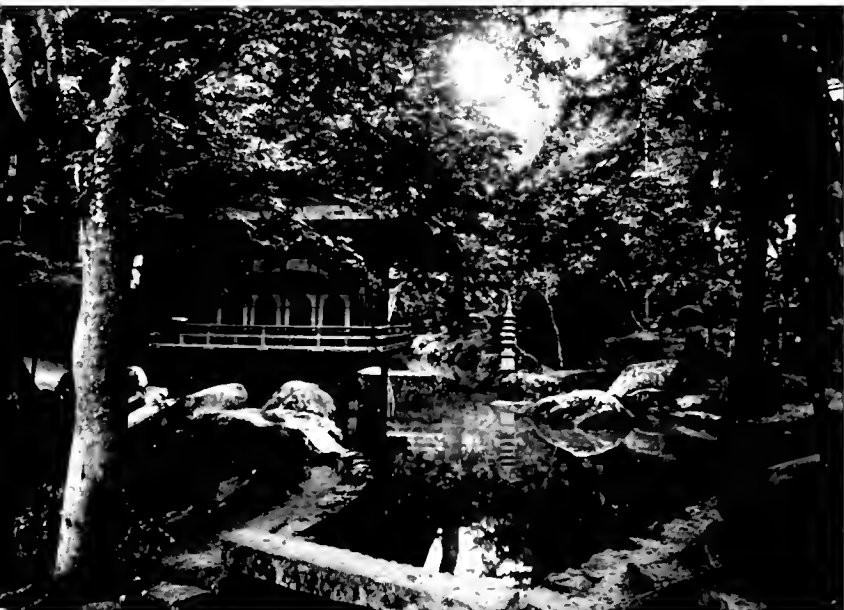
So concludes a typewritten manuscript entitled “The Gardens of Japan,” composed by Elizabeth K. Roys after a 1926 tour through the country. Roys—or “Betty,” as she was called—was a 21-year-old botany student at Smith College when she undertook a study of Japanese gardens. The visit to Japan was part of a larger journey through Asia, and Roys compiled similar reports on gardens she toured in China, Korea, Thailand (then Siam) and India.

Each paper was carefully arranged in a notebook with accompanying photographs, hand-drawn plans and plant lists. This five-volume collection was not discovered until after Roys’ death and was donated in 2004 to the Botanic Garden of Smith College, in Northampton, Massachusetts, where it became the focus of a traveling exhibit in 2006. The notebooks constitute a singular snapshot of landscapes in early 20th-century Asia. Roys’ work on Japan is noteworthy for the observations she includes and the moment she captures—a time of shifting political and cultural landscapes, echoed by a change in the way the Japanese garden was marketed to the West.

In total the voyage lasted eight months, between August 1926 and April 1927, and was precipitated by Roys’ mother’s position as the head of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian



“The approach to the temple [at Miyajima] from the land or back side. Here one sees the entrance tori, made of wood, and the many stone lanterns offered by grateful or supplicating patrons.”



Church in the United States. The first woman ever to hold the job, Mabel Milham Roys was responsible for inspecting the missions in her charge and planned a demanding itinerary that included stops in Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, Singapore, Siam, India, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece and Turkey. Her daughter accompanied her and undertook a survey of Asian gardens as a means of receiving academic credit during her absence from college. Elizabeth Roys' transcript from Smith College notes that "Miss Roys traveled in the Orient during the greater part of 1926–1927 and did a piece of work which had been planned out for her by our Dept. of Botany and upon which she organized the material in the spring when she returned to Northampton for several weeks."²

The Botany Department at Smith was thriving at the time, headed by the distinguished botanist and educator William F. Ganong, who supplied Roys with a letter of introduction to aid her in her study, writing:

The bearer of this letter is Miss Elizabeth Kirkland Roys, a very capable and successful student of this College, where she has specialized in the science of Botany. In the course of a tour she is making around the world with

her mother, she is continuing her botanical education through a systematic study of the botanical institutions along her route. [...] I therefore commend Miss Roys to the courtesy of my botanical colleagues in full confidence of her favorable reception according to the customs prevalent among us.³

Roys received a similar letter from Smith President William Allan Neilson, and the production of these documents may have assisted her in gaining access to some of the private gardens that she included in her analysis. Her mother's missionary network also facilitated connections to garden owners—particularly in China, where the Roys family had lived between 1904 and 1919 while Roys' father served the Presbyterian Church as chief surgeon in the teaching hospitals of Weih sien and Jinan. In a letter home to colleagues in November 1926, Mabel Roys observed:

Betty is having wonderful success with her pictures for her college paper on Oriental gardens.

ABOVE LEFT: "One of the ponds in the temple garden at Miyajima. Here one sees a typical little tea-house, built out over the water, with a porch around it, where one may sit to drink tea and enjoy the view. Huge old maples are to be found along the shore, with an occasional pine or cryptomeria. Notice the straight slab of stone laid across to form a bridge, and the little five-storied pagoda."

ABOVE RIGHT: "Another view of the great red torii, this time from the shore, showing a couple of fishing boats anchored off it."



She has no appointments to keep and can therefore go when light conditions are ideal, and take the whole day if she desires in one garden. I think her paper will be a great success; for everywhere our friends have made it possible for her to see gardens.⁴

In Japan, Roys was assisted by a “Mr. Ikiamo of Kyoto, a friend,” whose “great kindness” made it possible for her to visit the two private gardens she documented in that city, belonging to the Ichida and Yamamoto families.⁵ It is likely that “Ikiamo” was an inaccurate transcription of Akiyama: The author Aisaburo Akiyama gave Roys an inscribed copy of his English guidebook on Kyoto, “Sights of the Old Capital,” dated September 1926. This book remained in Roys’ possession throughout her life, along with a three-volume edition of “Tsukiyama Teizo-den,” a treatise on Japanese garden construction first written in 1735 by Kitamura Enkin and republished in 1828 by Akisato Rito. “Tsukiyama Teizo-den” exerted a sizable influence on



Anglophone accounts of the Japanese garden, beginning in 1893 with Josiah Conder’s “Landscape Gardening in Japan” and continuing well into the 20th century.⁶

Beyond these volumes, little evidence has surfaced about Roys’ research methods. Only one or two footnotes are found in the entire collection of five notebooks, although occasionally she includes uncited quotations that indicate her familiarity with other writers’ works on the subject, such as Lafcadio Hearn’s “Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan” (1894).⁷ The notebooks themselves are the best testament to her approach, which seems to have been founded on the empirical observation techniques that she would have relied on in her study of botany. Roys was particularly fascinated by dendrology,⁸ as evidenced by the plant list she included in her Japan notebook: Here she records only trees, particularly conifers, many of which were not described in readily available Anglophone guides to Japanese gardens. She includes *Abies homolepis*, *A. veitchii*, *Picea polita*, *Tsuga diversifolia*, *Chamaecyparis pisifera*, *C. obtusa* and the deciduous *Acer ginnala*, none of which was highlighted in Conder’s seminal text, for example. This suggests that Roys was compiling her own observations of gardens and plants as she traveled,

ABOVE LEFT: “A corner of the Ichida garden, Kyoto, showing the little lake and the distant hills that are included in the ensemble, a practice common, where possible, in Japanese gardens.”

ABOVE RIGHT: “Another view of the brook [in Count Okuma’s garden, Tokyo], showing the manner in which the bushes are trimmed and the small round-shaped pines are planted. Notice also in the background right that the crepe-myrtle tree is in bloom, this one having been grafted so that half the blossoms are white and the others pink. The brook widens out into a tiny lily pond in the foreground.”

rather than relying solely on others' accounts. Garden plans drafted in her own hand corroborate this argument.

The notebook on Japan moves fluidly between the disciplines of botany, horticulture, architecture and landscape architecture and possesses a refreshingly unselfconscious quality. Roys' concept of what constitutes a garden is equally fluid: Throughout her study of Asian gardens she is comfortable analyzing palace and temple courtyards, tombs, vines scrambling up country huts, nurseries and potted plants in doorways, all under the umbrella category of "garden." Not content to limit herself to the strict botanical study proposed by Ganong, she also comments freely on the design of the Japanese gardens she visits, whether she is describing the layering of the trees in Count Okuma's garden in Tokyo or the *kare-sansui*, or "dry landscape" garden, at the Daitoku-ji Temple in Kyoto. Throughout she displays a fairly sophisticated visual-spatial comprehension of the landscapes she documents. In the garden of Count Okuma, former prime minister of Japan, Roys values the variation in tones of green and the trees and shrubs that are

so selected and trained that one gets enough variation in size and shape alone without any color variation being necessary. The cryptomerias are tall and spire-like; the maples broad-topped; the pines slanting their branches at every possible angle of picturesqueness; while the little ones are kept trimmed to look as small as the azalea bushes. [...] The impression of the garden as a whole is one of



*varied, interestingly composed and restful greenness.*⁹

At Daitoku-ji—likely in the garden at Daisen-in (though she is not explicit)—Roys acknowledges that the dry landscape style might be challenging for Westerners used to abundant plant growth, but goes on to praise its spatial composition and the handling of light and shadow:

*To the average westerner this garden means nothing, but a dry bleak spot where water and greenness might have been. He does not understand that Soami did not design this garden to reproduce a scene from nature; he was struggling to express his conception of the beautiful. I think that he and the Post-Impressionists of today would find much in common. Whether we can understand all the sermons that Soami endeavored to write in these stones, or not, none of us should fail to appreciate the conceptions and the masterly carrying-out of the details. The eternal freshness and vitality of the garden is derived from the space-effect suggested by the arrangement of the stones, the contrast of color, and the light and shadow effect of the dark background and the white-sanded ground. Altogether, it is a curiously appealing garden, inspiring an intellectual as well as an emotional appreciation of its beauties.*¹⁰

Roys' perspective on the Japanese garden is perhaps most significant for its timing: She visited the country in the very last days of the Taishō Period (1912–1926), a turbulent era marked by the collision of traditional Japanese culture with

ABOVE: Photograph of Elizabeth K. Roys, taken in Egypt during her 1926–27 travels. Courtesy of Lynn and Bill Whitford.

OPPOSITE: An excerpt of the list of trees typically found in Japanese gardens, as compiled by Elizabeth K. Roys.

Appendix I

Trees most commonly used in Japanese Gardens.

<i>Taxus cuspidata</i> - Taxaceae	varieties with yellow leaves, and dwarf forms.
<i>Podocarpus macrophylla</i> - "	varieties with variegated forms.
<i>Pinus densiflora</i> - Pinaceae	dwarf forms, and varieties with pendulous branches and yellow leaves.
" <i>Thunbergii</i> - "	
<i>Larix Kaempferi</i> - "	
<i>Abies homolepis</i> - "	
" <i>Veitchii</i> - "	
" <i>firma</i> - "	
<i>Picea polita</i> - "	
" <i>Keyamai</i> - "	
" <i>bicolor</i> - "	
<i>Tsuga Sieboldi</i> - "	
" <i>diversifolia</i> - "	
<i>Sciadopitys verticillata</i> - Binaceae -	
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i> - Pinaceae -	
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> - !	varieties with grey foliage and procumbent branches.
<i>Chamaecyparis pisifera</i> "	varieties with slender, thread-like pendulous branches, or dense conical habit, or thickly branched spreading feathery silvery foliage.
" <i>obtusa</i> - "	varieties with pendulous branches, or low spreading rigid branches, or short densely fronded, or very low from with bluish-grey leaves.

new Western aesthetic expressions and mores. In the first decades of the 20th century, Japan struggled to define a uniquely Japanese modernism, determining which aspects of its tradition it would preserve—in arenas as diverse as government,

architecture, technology, economics, clothing and gender roles, to name a few—and which it would abandon in favor of American or European models. Roys' survey falls within this period of artistic and cultural scrutiny and was doubtless

impacted by the changing views of her Japanese guide(s) and hosts.

Roys' visit also occurs at the end of a relative period of silence in Anglophone writings on Japanese gardens. In the 1920s, the flurry of publishing that had characterized the 1890s and 1910s had diminished. A resurgence of texts in English, published both by Japanese and Western writers, would not occur until the late '20s and early '30s, with the appearance of books by Jiro Harada (1928), Ralph Adams Cram (1930) and Loraine Kuck (1935).¹¹ Whereas the earliest Anglophone texts on the Japanese garden reveal a certain multiplicity of viewpoints, driven by their authors' expectations, the accounts of the 1930s and later begin to suggest a more carefully curated portrait of the Japanese garden, one that appears to have been actively promoted by the Japanese themselves.

For example, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, British authors such as Francis Taylor Piggott, Ella and Florence DuCane, and Mrs. Basil Taylor advocated what scholar Wybe Kuitert has called a "flowery image" of Japanese gardens.¹² This romantic depiction was grounded, Kuitert argues, in an exotic, idealized vision of Japan in the West that was only enhanced by the country's 1905 victory in the Russo-Japanese war.¹³ The DuCane sisters' 1908 volume, "The Flowers and Gardens of Japan," is filled with Ella DuCane's luminous watercolors of gardens and temples dripping with flowers. Similarly, Piggott's 1896 chronicle, "The Gardens of Japan: A Year's Diary of its Flowers," traces Japanese gardens throughout the course of a year through a catalog of their flowering plants. Piggott describes Japan as a "land of ever-opening flowers" and observes that "looking back through the year just past, the path of Time seems literally to have been strewn with bright falling petals."¹⁴

The emphasis these writers place on flowers is at odds with the prevailing portrait of the Japanese garden as relying primarily on evergreens, with a sparing use of flowering plant material. This "flowerless" depiction was promulgated by the likes of Josiah Conder, Samuel Newsom ("Japanese Garden Construction," 1939), and

Roys herself; and by the late 1920s, it seems to have been accepted as canon (indeed to this day). According to Shoji Yamada, the late 1920s also coincided with the emergence of garden history as a professional discipline in Japan,¹⁵ suggesting that increased Japanese writings on the subject may have reinforced a more homogenous presentation of the Japanese garden to Western audiences.

Long-term collaborations between Anglophone and Japanese scholars and garden designers, notably Conder and Kinkichirô Honda, also served to promote a highly circumscribed representation of the Japanese garden—both in text and in elaborate display gardens erected for international expositions, such as the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush, London. Since the late 19th century, these exhibitions had been particularly vital economic and political tools for the Japanese government, which, facing a trade deficit, found cultural artifacts—including gardens—to be especially exportable commodities.¹⁶

While no documentation exists to support Roys' exposure to exhibition gardens or specific scholarly works, comments in her notebook indicate that she shared many of the dominant perceptions of her day. Her observation that "flowers are seldom if ever used in these gardens, for they would disturb if not destroy altogether the impression of a landscape seen from afar, one of the fundamental ideas of Japanese gardening,"¹⁷ echoes similar remarks in Conder's "Landscape Gardening in Japan" (1893) and Harada's "The Gardens of Japan" (1928), among others.¹⁸

Yet the organization of Roys' manuscript is more evocative of a travelogue than the typical formulaic treatise of the era, which was ordered by abstract category, describing how to build the ideal hill garden (or *tsukiyama*) and flat garden (*hiraniwa*). Roys is also more eclectic and comprehensive in her subject matter, as noted above, describing all of the elements of the Japanese built environment that she finds compelling. Lastly, she records the plants that are most interesting to her, rather than repeating an already established list of appropriate plant material. Her work is significant, therefore, in

that it offers an alternative portrait of the early 20th-century Japanese garden.

Considered alongside the “flowery” image of the DuCanes and Piggott and the dominant representation catalyzed by Conder, Roys’ notebook suggests a greater diversity of Japanese garden styles than has been accepted and promoted in the West. Her account also illustrates the degree to which Anglophone writers and their Japanese guides shaped—and continue to shape—Western understanding and expectations of the Japanese landscape. Roys’ position in this trajectory is unique: She has one foot solidly in the discipline of botany and is relying on her field observations, while her experience and subsequent artistic evaluation is directed—to some degree—by at least one guide, Aisaburo Akiyama.

The influence of Anglophone visitors and their Japanese hosts on the almost mythic depiction of the Japanese garden in the West is only beginning to be examined by scholars. Further research on the Roys family’s missionary connections and the human networks that made Betty Roys’ visits possible may help provide a more nuanced understanding of the early 20th-century garden in Japan and the community of travelers, guides and scholars so intent on fixing its elusive qualities on paper. ~

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4 Mabel Roys to “Marianne,” November 13, 1926. Mabel Milham Roys Papers, Sophia Smith Collection (Northampton, MA).
5 Roys, “The Gardens of Japan,” 9.
6 “Tsukiyama Teizo-den” appears in a startling number of books published on the Japanese garden in the early 20th century, including Kinkichirô Honda, “Japanese Landscape Gardening” (“European and Japanese Gardens: Papers read before the American Institute of Architects,” 1902); Tsuyoshi Tamura, “Zengaku gairon” (“Introduction to Landscape Architecture,” 1925); Jiro Harada, “The Gardens of Japan” (1928); Loraine Kuck, “100 Kyoto Gardens” (1935); and Samuel Newsom, “Japanese Garden Construction” (1939). Thanks to Mark Bourne, MS Architecture Candidate, University of Washington, for a description of its influence.
7 In her notebook on Chinese gardens, Roys adapts Hearn’s comment about flowering plums and cherries in Japan: “Is it that the trees have been so long domesticated and caressed by man in this land of the Gods, that they have acquired souls, and strive to show their gratitude, like women loved, by making themselves more beautiful for man’s sake?” (Lafcadio Hearn, “Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan,” Vol. 1 [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1894], 21) She writes instead, of the New Summer Palace in Peking: “The flowering fruit-trees come in the spring, domesticated and made more beautiful by the long ages of loving care in this country until, as the Chinese say, they have acquired souls, and try to show their gratitude, like women loved, by making themselves more beautiful” (Roys, “The Gardens of China,” [unpublished manuscript, Botanic Garden of Smith College]: 18).
8 Mabel Roys’ letters home refer to her daughter’s interest in trees, which Roys seems to have pursued throughout her life. After her graduation from Smith she sought to enroll in the Yale School of Forestry but was denied admission because of her gender.
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10 Ibid., 5.
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New Books for Pacific Northwest Gardeners

BY BRIAN R. THOMPSON

Japanese Gardens in North America

"Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America" is itself a book of quiet beauty, and an excellent introduction to Japanese-style gardens throughout Canada and the United States. Photographer David Cobb, from Mosier (near Hood River, Oregon), is particularly adept at emphasizing the contrasts between light and shadow, the subtle reflections in still waters, and the energy of moving water in his subjects. I have visited many of the 26 featured gardens, and he captures the spirit of these very well.

Text author Kendall Brown is an Asian art historian at California State University, Long Beach. His introductory essay places these gardens in the context of what he sees as five distinctive historical periods beginning at the end of the 19th century. The Seattle Japanese Garden—along with gardens in Portland, at the University of British Columbia, and at the Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island—are all placed in the second of these periods, a time of "Building Bridges" following World War II.

Feeling regional pride, I read the chapter on this period first, and I wasn't disappointed. Brown is good at telling (what are often) convoluted histories. He underscores the importance of our local gardens in the development of the Japanese style in North America: "The Seattle Japanese Garden also set a new standard as the earliest major permanent garden built in North America by well-established designers from Japan." He further

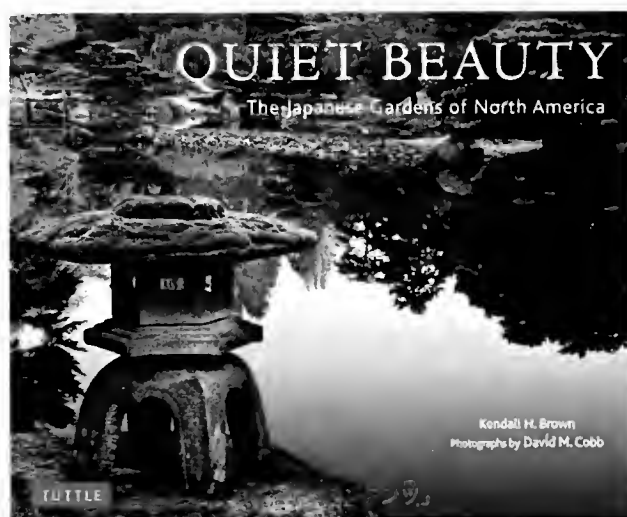
compliments it as being "...arguably one of the finest in North America."

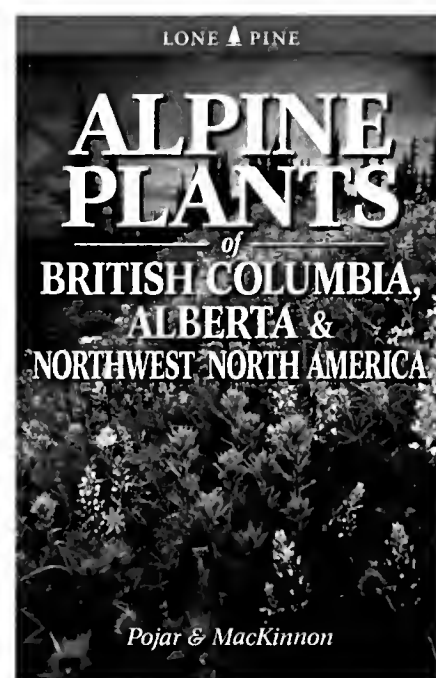
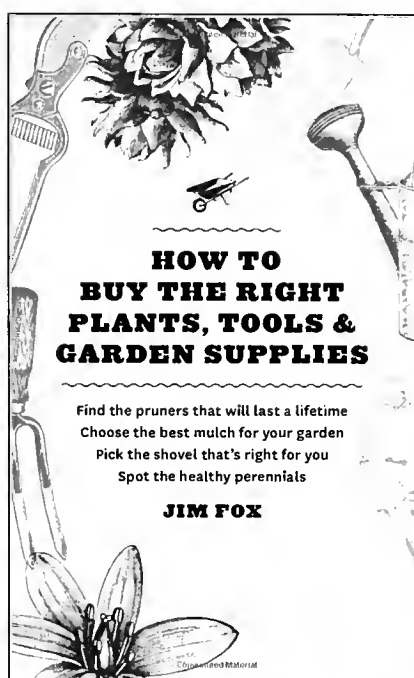
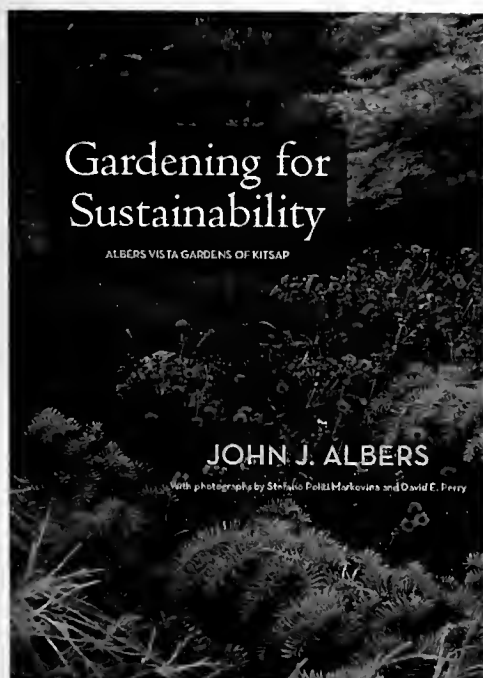
Featured in a later chapter is Spokane's Nishinomiya Garden in Manito Park, while another 10 gardens from throughout Washington (including the Kubota Garden) and British Columbia are briefly described in the appendices, making this an important garden book for the Pacific Northwest. Brown's earlier (1999) book, "Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast," is also worth reading for a more in-depth general history of this style.

New Garden on the Kitsap Peninsula

"Gardening for Sustainability" is almost two books in one. The first part takes you on an intimate tour of the Albers Vista Gardens near Bremerton, Washington—approximately four acres lovingly crafted by author John Albers and his wife Santica Marcovina over the last 15 years. I kept a post-it note on the garden map for frequent reference as I walked page-by-page through the 14 garden rooms; the history, purpose and plantings of each room were made very real by the considerable descriptive detail and excellent photographs.

"As visitors stand among the Three Islands dreaming of distant lands, they have the choice of proceeding through the open sea of crushed granite or continuing up Madrona Lane." Transitions like this hold your interest as you continue your tour, picking up ideas to use for your own garden, such as "...the underutilized chaste tree [*Vitex agnus-castus*]...is an





ideal substitute for the [invasive] butterfly bush [*Buddleia davidii*].”

The author’s enthusiasm is especially apparent in a chapter on special collections, including dwarf conifers, striped-bark and Japanese maples and viburnums. Much of his interest in the latter genus was sparked by the collection at the Washington Park Arboretum, which he studied and described while taking classes through the Center for Urban Horticulture in the 1990s.

The second part of the book is a concise essay on landscape sustainability—excellent reading for any gardener. These principles and practices are the basis for the design and maintenance of the Albers Vista Gardens. But despite best intentions, the author freely admits that errors do happen. A section titled “Planting Too Many Unusual Specimens” warns against creating a garden with visual overload, an example of an error that most gardeners have experienced. He concludes that it is best to “...learn from your mistake and move on to the next joyful garden project.”

The garden is open to visitors by appointment or for special events. More information is available at www.albersvistagardens.org.

How to be a Shrewd Plant Shopper

Jim Fox is a consumer advocate. More specifically, a gardening consumer advocate. His goal is “...to educate you to be a savvy consumer so you can be confident that your gardening dollars are

well spent.” To achieve this goal, he has written a shopping guide: “How to Buy the Right Plants, Tools & Garden Supplies.”

Many general gardening books touch on plant buying or tool selection, but typically include the information at the back of the book or in a brief introduction that the reader hastily skims over to get to the real excitement—an encyclopedia of plants in glorious color. Fox recognizes how critical this basic information is for all gardeners, experienced or not, and uses clarity, broad experience and considerable wit to engage the reader, leaving the colorful photos and plant bios to the several other books that he recommends.

I found the author’s insights into the process of buying and selling plants particularly engaging, demonstrating his perspectives as both an avid collector of specialty plants and as a long-time nursery worker. “To get good service, you need to be a good customer,” he strongly recommends. For example, spouting your own expertise is a quick way to shut down any helpful advice you might receive from the true expert.

After reading this book, I have a much better appreciation for the dedicated men and women who own and run nurseries and must be skilled at managing both plants and people. All so that we can have the cool plants we really, really want.

Field Guide to Alpine Plants

Jim Pojar and Andy MacKinnon became household names, at least among those households



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New Books for Fall Reading

- *The Good Life Lab: Radical Experiments in Hands-On Living*, by Wendy Tremayne and Dale Dougherty (Storey Publishing, 2013; \$18.95)
- *Backyard Foraging: 65 Familiar Plants You Didn't Know You Could Eat*, by Ellen Zachos (Storey Publishing, 2013; \$16.95)
- *Must-See Birds of the Pacific Northwest*, by Sarah Swanson and Max Smith (Timber Press, 2013; \$19.95)

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interested in native plants, with the publication in 1994 of “Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast.” Since it was published, it has been the most popular field guide in the Miller Library because of its clarity, organization and plant keys—and for the many features that give it added value.

Now, the two British Columbia authors/editors have matched their earlier work with a new title, “Alpine Plants of the Northwest.” While the previous work was a comprehensive study of all plants west of the Cascades, this book extends to the alpine and subalpine areas from the coast east to the Rockies, including north to the Yukon and Alaska. This is a large region, but as the number of plants that thrive above the timberline is limited, the guide is quite manageable, especially for those who hike in these areas. Like the earlier book, the Lone Pine publication has a soft but weather-resistant cover, making it worth having at least one copy in your hiking party.

This model for field guides anywhere is a good blend of information for a broad range of competencies. Detailed keys, required by those who are knowledgeable or expert, are nicely matched with photographs, drawings and descriptions that will aid anyone in identification. Vexing, hard-to-distinguish species have additional aids, such as a chart with descriptive comparisons of both leaves and flowers of the many *Potentilla* or a page of leaf silhouettes of the members of the Carrot Family (Apiaceae).

But even if you are not a high-country traveler, there is much to recommend in this book. The extensive introduction is much more than a how-to-use-this-guide as it provides an excellent background, covering both the history and change of the geology and climate of the area of study, as well as the adaptations of plant life. Throughout the body of plant descriptions are short sidebar essays to supplement the introduction.

Some of these are just for fun, such as the authors’ top-10 favorite alpine, chosen by “flower size relative to the entire plant; appearance and color; impact factor; plant chutzpah or

élan.” What is number one? It’s the mountain sapphire (*Eritrichium nanum*), a cushion plant with stunning, powder-blue flowers. Elsewhere, all five contributing authors describe their favorite alpine areas of the region.

This sense of fun is present throughout all the writing, but typically with a thoughtful point to make. “In past books, we’ve argued that scientific names are worth learning because they are generally more stable over time [...but] it’s becoming more and more difficult to make that argument with a straight face.” This leads to a discussion of the regular changes that now occur in plant genera and families due to advances in genetic analysis. The authors conclude, “You can also learn scientific names to impress people,” throwing in the tabloid-quality tidbit that singer/model Carla Bruni married former French president Nicolas Sarkozy partly because “he knows all the Latin names” of plants!

Briefly

Audrey Lieberworth enjoyed an active, outdoor childhood in Seattle, but not until she left for Scripps College did she realize “...just how much the connections I made with these [Seattle] landscapes as a child had shaped the person I had become.” The result of this revelation is her senior thesis, “Seattle’s Orchards: A Historic Legacy Meets Modern Sustainability.”

The heart of this work is a survey of 11 orchards—some historical, others recently planted—including their history, their setting in the neighborhood, and types of trees. Also reviewed are the communities supporting each orchard, broad-based programs that support the preservation of trees throughout the city, and the role of the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation. This engaging report is available in print at the Miller Library, but also online from Scripps (see “Bibliography—Autumn 2013” below).

Two helpful books from our neighbors to the south are worth knowing about if you are planning a garden to attract wildlife or feature native plants. Both “The California Wildlife Habitat Garden” and “California Native Gardening” are

written by authors from the Bay Area and have a greater affinity for the northern part of their state. This is to our advantage, as many of the techniques and recommended plant selections will work in our region, too.

Finally, be sure to read “The Drunken Botanist.” While author Amy Stewart lives in Eureka, California, she is a frequent visitor to Seattle, and this book is just too much fun not to include as a local resource. The subtitle tells it all: “The Plants that Create the World’s Great Drinks.” Cheers! ☺

BRIAN THOMPSON is the manager and curator of the Elisabeth C. Miller Library of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. He is also a current member of the CBHL Literature Award selection committee.

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